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dialect group. Neither has "blunting," which process, however, may possibly have had something to do with the introduction of the spelling *ea* and *oa*; both have "sharpening." Common to both and the South is the new symmetry between ME. *ā* and *ȳ*. The conflicting testimony of the earlier grammarians concerning the pronunciation of ME. *ā* and *ai* reflects, not the struggle between the old and the new in the same dialect, but the difference between the more progressive East and South and the more conservative Midland (cf. *Anglia* xiv, 268).

Dialectal influence reveals itself further in a number of more or less isolated elements introduced at various times. In the sixteenth century the region north of the Humber contributes swoon, woo, wee, probably also roe, <*hroga*, and diphthongal *ei* in either. In the second half of the seventeenth century the *ȳ* sound of broad, groat, bought, brought, etc., enters from the western part of the South; the same is true of *uv* in one, once. Key with the sound corresponding to ME *ē* belongs to the West Midland. The *ē* in break, great, steak, yea, which first shows itself in the first half of the eighteenth century, probably comes from the Southwest. To this list must be added the North-Humbrian sixteenth and seventeenth century variants with *ē*, *ō* for OE. *i*-, *u*-, in such words as above, love, some, come, son, etc.

Enough has been said to show the importance of this work to the student of Modern and Middle English Phonology. To the student of sound change in general, Luick's penetrating analyses of the relations between single sounds as such and of causal connections between their apparently spontaneous changes, will be especially welcome. His explanations of the displacement of one sound by another, and of the tendency toward symmetry, constitute a valuable addition to the body of general principles as formulated by Paul and Sweet. And whether or not future labors in the same field will lead to the conviction that we know less than we thought we did, it will hardly be wholly premature for us--
 "uns an der Einfachheit und Durchsichtigkeit der Zusammenhänge zu erfreuen, mit einer Art ästhetischen Wolgefallens die saubere

Abgrenzung des ungestörten Lautwandels zu verfolgen und die strenge Gesetzmässigkeit, der sich die Einzelfälle unterordnen, hier ebenso zu bewundern wie sonst im Wirken der Natur" (p. 322).

ALEXIS F. LANGE.

University of California.

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE 'WALPURGISNACHT.'

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES.

SIRS:—In the March number of the NOTES Mr. Clyde B. Furst tries his hand upon the "heillose Verwirrung," as Erich Schmidt calls it, which is presented by the chronology of the love-tragedy in *Faust*. I have read in a teachable mood the passages in which he pays his respects to me, but I am unable to see that he has really squared the circle. What he does is to offer an explanation which would be very good indeed, and very obvious withal,—if only there were nothing to explain. In other words he dodges the central crux of the whole matter,—the *übermorgen* of l. 3662. He thinks it "not inconceivable that the word may have an indefinite future meaning," although he has been "unable to find any other instances of such use." Probably he will continue unable to find them, but even if he should meet with better success than I anticipate, the proposed interpretation would have to be ruled out of court in view of the preceding words of Mephistopheles:

So spukt mir schon durch alle Glieder
Die herrliche Walpurgisnacht.

These lines point clearly to a Walpurgis-Night which is just ahead,—near enough to account for Mephisto's 'Rammelei.' Or would Mr. Furst teach that the devil feels the electric thrill of the great festival several months in advance?

It is then a fixed datum, if anything in *Faust* can be fixed by words, that the Valentin-scene takes place just before the Walpurgis-Night. Now suppose we adopt Mr. Furst's supposition, which is one that has probably occurred to every careful reader of the poem, and was thoroughly pondered by me when I was writing my Introduction; the supposition, namely, that the Walpurgis-Night is that of the year

following the one in which the *liaison* begins. The inference must then be that at the time of her brother's death Gretchen is on the verge of motherhood, if not already a mother. This is thinkable, though for obvious reasons one would rather not think it. But now the *next* scene, with the tell-tale lines 3790-3, clearly refers to an earlier time and yet at this time Gretchen has on her conscience the death of both mother *and* brother. Else why the late insertion of the line

Auf deiner Schwelle wessen Blut?

What do we gain then, so far as rational chronology is concerned, by pressing any particular supposition concerning the Walpurgis-Night? We get a tweedledum in place of a tweedledee. The fact remains that as the text stands, and if language is not to be twisted out of its obvious import, the sequence of the scenes can not be fitted into a natural order of events.

And now, what of it? What attitude shall a critic of the poem assume with regard to that fact? Mr. Furst seems to think that he is coming to the rescue of Goethe's art in *Faust* by trying to prove it consistent with the laws of time and space. But since the poem as a whole is undeniably a dream-world in which the impossible is taken as a matter of course, why should we care very much whether a particular part of it is humanly possible or not? Let me close this letter with an imaginary conversation *à la Landor*, between Goethe and Eckermann:

"Heute bei Goethe zu Tische. Ich äusserte einige Bedenken in Betreff der Chronologie der Liebestragödie im *Faust*, indem ich ihn darauf aufmerksam machte, dass die Scene, welche Valentins Tod darstellt, offenbar am 29 April eintrete und demnach die hohe Schwangerschaft Gretchens voraussetzen müsse; wogegen die darauf folgende Domszene ganz bestimmt auf einen früheren Zustand deute und trotzdem eine Anspielung auf den Tod des Bruders enthalte. Wie haben Excellenz das eigentlich gemeint? fragte ich. Goethe antwortete, indem er mich mit grossen Augen anblickte: Wie kommt man auf solche wunderliche Gedanken? Mein Faust ist doch kein Beitrag zur Obstetrik. Genug; den Poeten bindet keine Zeit."

CALVIN THOMAS.

Columbia University.

'WALPURGISNACHT.'

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES,

SIRS:—A reading of Professor Thomas's communication in this issue of MOD. LANG. NOTES has not caused me to alter my conclusion with regard to the chronology of the Walpurgisnacht in *Faust*, as expressed in the March number of the NOTES. The single objection brought forward by Professor Thomas is based upon an unwarranted inference, namely, "that at the time of her brother's death Gretchen is on the verge of motherhood, if not already a mother."

It has been suggested by Professor Bright that it may be possible to accept my conclusion (that the Walpurgisnacht to which Mephistopheles conducts Faust occurred in the year following that in which the love story of the drama took place) without supposing for the *übermorgen* of line 3662 any interpretation other than the literal one. He suggests that the *übermorgen* passage is to be understood literally as referring to the Walpurgisnacht of the first year, but that the action of the scene takes place upon the Walpurgisnacht of the second year, when Mephistopheles leads Faust to the Brocken festival, which has been dramatically anticipated by the *übermorgen* passage and the line (2590) in the Hexenküche.

CLYDE B. FURST.

Johns Hopkins University.

AMERICAN DIALECTS.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES.

SIRS: At a recent meeting of the American Dialect Society a committee was appointed to supervise the reading of American books, for the purpose of collecting all words and uses of words not yet recorded in dictionaries. This is part of the larger work of the Society in gathering all dialectal material which represents spoken and written usage in America. Such material will be eventually incorporated, it is hoped, in a compendious American Dialect Dictionary, similar to the English Dialect Dictionary now in course of publication.

The reading of American books for this purpose has already begun, but the committee desires to secure more volunteers for this important undertaking. The books to be read